

## *‘I really like the Militant’s coverage of today’s strikes’*

BY SETH GALINSKY

The six-week drive to win more than 300 current *Militant* readers to renew their subscriptions to the socialist newsweekly is off to a good start, with 68 renewals in hand. The goal is to win renewals from at least 20% of the more than 1,300 people around the world who subscribed to the paper during the fall.

Among recent subscribers are strikers met on union picket lines, family farmers and taxicab drivers fighting crushing debt; opponents of the U.S. rulers’ economic war against Cuba’s socialist revolution; and hundreds of working people who subscribed after Socialist Workers Party candidates or campaigners knocked on their doors.

Marrie Martinez, who renewed her subscription a week ago, plans to get together soon with members of the Socialist Workers Party in Fort Worth, Texas, to discuss the article, “Working-Class Fight for Women’s Emancipation, Support for Families.” Martinez has questions about how the Socialist Workers Party’s defense of working-class families includes decriminalization of abortion.

That article explains that the dis-

**Continued on page 3**

## Colorado fire disaster is result of capitalist greed

Houses built for profits, not safety, fire protection



Reuters/Alyson McClaran

Anthony D’Amario, 18, looks through home’s remains in Louisville, Colorado, Dec. 31. Almost 1,000 homes were destroyed as residents were left on their own to escape fast-moving fire.

BY KAREN RAY

WESTMINSTER, Colo. — By the end of the day Dec. 30 nearly 1,000 homes and businesses had been burned

### AS I SEE IT

to the ground in Superior and Louisville, Colorado, leaving thousands homeless and two Denver suburbs in ruin. Nearby towns, like here where I live, were

threatened, but escaped.

The Marshall Fire burned 6,219 acres in less than 12 hours, whipped ever forward by 100 mph winds. More than 35,000 people were under emergency evacuation orders as the fire jumped house to house — and across highways — at incredible speeds. Two people are missing and presumed dead. This is the worst wildfire in Colorado history.

Kent Crawford, 75, was working from his townhome when the fire broke

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## *Sanitation workers strike for safety, pay in California*

BY LAURA GARZA

CHULA VISTA, Calif. — Some 250 sanitation workers in the San Diego area continue to walk picket lines here since going on strike Dec. 17 against Republic Services. Members of Teamsters Local 542, many in rain gear for the winter storms that poured down, maintain pickets at four locations in their fight for safer trucks and working conditions and for higher wages.

“After Republic took over, conditions began deteriorating,” Cesar Silva, 38, a driver with 16 years on the job, told the *Militant*. “There were a lot of write-ups, trucks in bad condition, safety concerns. They demand we have PPE [personal protective equipment] but then they don’t order sufficient supplies, like gloves.”

This is the first time these workers have gone on strike. Silva said

**Continued on page 4**

## *Prosecutors use ‘felony murder’ to jail people who didn’t kill anyone*

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

When three Caucasian men were convicted in the Brunswick, Georgia, killing of African American jogger Ahmaud Arbery last November, two were found guilty, not of killing him but of “felony murder.” That is, they didn’t kill Arbery but were present and committed other crimes where he was shot to death.

The *Militant* objected, pointing out that “many capitalist politicians and prosecutors have used ‘felony murder’ charges in many states across the country to obtain harsh and long sentences.”

One clear example of this is the ex-

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## *Pittsburgh protests demand ‘Charge officers now!’ in killing of Jim Rogers*



WPXI-TV

Oct. 15 vigil in Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, for Jim Rogers, homeless man who died after tased by cops at least eight times, then denied medical treatment when he asked for it.

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH — “Charge these officers now!” chanted 20 protesters outside the City-County Building here Dec. 17, demanding the cops who repeatedly stunned Jim Rogers with Tasers Oct. 13 be charged. Rogers died in the hospital the next day. His

family and friends have been organizing weekly vigils and protests since.

Rogers, a 54-year-old African American who was homeless, had been confronted by cops after they received a report he had taken a bicycle from a front yard, rode it around, and

**Continued on page 2**

## *Fidel Castro: Cuba shows revolution needs Marxist leadership to win*

The condensed excerpts below are taken from a Dec. 1, 1961, speech published rapidly by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which campaigned across the U.S. in defense of Cuba’s unfolding socialist revolution, under the title “Fidel Castro Speaks on Marxism-Leninism.” The *Militant* is printing these excerpts — just a small portion of the rich 82-page pamphlet — to mark the 63rd anniversary of the revolution.

The speech was broadcast from a Havana television studio to discuss with the Cuban working people the formation of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, which later became the Communist Party of Cuba.

On July 26, 1953, Castro led some 160 revolutionaries to attack the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba, part of initiating a fight to overturn the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. The attack failed and

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**—On the picket line, p. 5—**

NY Teamsters strike at United Metro Energy enters ninth month

Pallet distribution workers in Manchester strike for 5% pay rise



Protests: ‘Charge officers now!’

Continued from front page

then returned it. The cops said they decided he was “noncompliant.” Video taken on the scene shows Tasers being used against him at least eight times, and cops rolling him around on the ground.

“Those 12 officers failed to uphold policy,” Devon Adwoa told fellow protesters. “We demand the names of every official on the scene, and the release of the surveillance footage and body camera footage taken that day.” Adwoa said that the officers should face charges “for their crimes and negligence that day.”

Adwoa told the *Tribune-Review*, “We’ve heard almost nothing in the months we’ve been fighting this.” Mayor-elect Edward Gainey has declined to answer questions about Rogers, saying he hadn’t been briefed on

the situation.

The Allegheny County Medical Examiner’s Office Jan. 3 reported that Rogers died from a lack of oxygen to the brain, but termed it “accidental.”

“We know, at the end of the day, District Attorney Stephen Zappala has the power to charge these officers,” Adwoa told the *Tribune-Review*. “That’s one of our concrete demands.” There are plans for further protests.

Days after the Dec. 17 action, police here released a report revealing Rogers pleaded for help at least 13 times after being put in the back of the police car. “I need a hospital, I can’t breathe, get a medic, help me,” the report quoted him saying.

Despite officers saying that Rogers had requested medical assistance, emergency medical technicians who were called to the scene never tended to him, instead spending their time decontaminating cops who had gotten hit by Rogers’ blood.

The officers who finally drove Rogers to the hospital arrived almost 40 minutes after he’d been arrested. They told hospital personnel that Rogers was unresponsive and CPR was started.

In the wake of the police report, outgoing Mayor William Perduto told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Dec. 29 that disciplinary action reports had been served on nine cops for their treatment of Rogers. No details have been provided on what action has been proposed and against which officers. Any proposed discipline must be approved the city’s Director of Public Safety. The city still refuses to release the officers’ names.

Donaire strikers in LA fight for respect, decent pay



Militant/Norton Sandler

SANTA FE SPRINGS, Calif. — “Morale is good, nobody has walked in,” strike leader Miguel Perez told the *Militant* Jan. 3, “even though the company canceled our insurance at the end of December.” The strike by 175 Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 37 members, the majority women, at the Rich Products-owned Jon Donaire Deserts is in its ninth week.

Strikers on Dec. 17 overwhelmingly rejected the company’s latest offer of a 50-cent per hour annual raise and a steep hike in health care coverage costs. No negotiations have taken place since.

Marta Montéz, who has worked at the plant for a year and a half, was one of the 15 workers on picket duty, Jan. 3, above. “Our issues remain respect, decent pensions, and pay,” she said.

Magdalena Torrez joined the discussion, saying, “The company has no respect for the family. They refuse to give time off for medical appointments, or other family problems. They make us work 10, 11 hours a day.

“My pay is \$17.45 an hour. You can’t live on that. Now they want us to pay over \$500 for an individual’s health care and over \$800 for me and my husband,” she said.

— NORTON SANDLER

Larry Herman, photographer, supporter of Communist League

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Larry Herman, 79, a longtime supporter of the Communist League in the U.K., died suddenly Dec. 29.

Herman, born to a Jewish family in New York, moved here in 1968. He joined the Communist League’s forerunner, the International Marxist Group, in the mid-1970s following a trip to Northern Ireland, where the struggle to end the British army’s occupation had a big impact on him. For over a decade he lived in Sheffield, working in a steel

foundry. In recent years he became a supporter of the communist movement, taking responsibility for helping to produce the audio edition of the *Militant*.

Herman was a celebrated photographer, taking pictures of workers at work and where they live, “not as victims,” he would often say. For some years he worked with the CTC, the Central Organization of Cuban Workers, on a “Cuban workers at work” presentation. It was exhibited by unions in the U.K. and by the CTC in Havana and toured across Cuba.

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“The purpose of the cops is to *punish*, not patrol, to keep workers in line, to make an example of you if you come from the wrong class — and more so if you happen to be the wrong color or the wrong nationality.”

THE MILITANT

*Russian Revolution advanced women’s equality*

*The ‘Militant’ explains how after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Soviet government led by V.I. Lenin backed women in making giant advances. This included equal rights like divorce; a 1919 literacy drive; state-run health and child care, as well as decriminalizing abortion.*

Literacy class for women factory workers in Moscow after 1917 Russian Revolution.

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‘I like Militant’s labor coverage’

Continued from front page  
cussion about women’s emancipation starts with combating the many obstacles the capitalist rulers put in front of working people wishing to start a family. The article takes up the fight for affordable child care, the right to adopt without bureaucratic obstacles, and family planning, including contraception and hospital-provided abortion. It explains why joining fights for women’s rights is key to uniting the working class.

Martinez told SWP member Josefina Otero that she has friends she thinks would be interested in reading the *Militant* and exchanging views with members of the party on the way forward for the labor movement.

Otero reports that seven subscribers there — almost everyone they spoke to so far — renewed their subscriptions. This included an official of the United Steelworkers union they met at a protest in Irving, Texas, in support of locked-out workers at ExxonMobil in Beaumont. Given such a good response, the Socialist Workers Party branch there voted to raise its goal from nine to 15.

“And several subscribers are thinking about friends or relatives who might be interested in the paper,” Otero told the *Militant*. Every reader of the *Militant* can help expand the reach of the socialist newsweekly and books by Socialist Workers Party leaders and other revolutionaries.

“I really liked the paper’s reporting on union struggles,” retired government worker Annette Springer told Janice Lynn when she renewed her subscription in Atlanta Jan. 2. “The unions had been down for a while, so

it is good to read about how they are standing up and fighting again.”  
Lynn added, “We are seeing more workers using their unions to fight against attacks on our wages and working conditions — and building solidarity.” These strikes set an example to millions of other workers about what can be done to fight to end multitier wage scales that widen divisions among workers and to fight for cost-of-living adjustments so that wages automatically go up when prices rise.

Defense of rights working class needs

“I liked reading about why people fighting for their rights benefits the whole community,” Springer said.

The *Militant* provides coverage of burning issues of the day from a working-class standpoint. One young woman who Helen Meyers and Edwin Fruit spoke to in Minneapolis said she likes the *Militant’s* coverage of union fights. But she had questions about the paper’s reporting on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse in Kenosha, Wisconsin. She thought the outcome “was a mess.”

Rittenhouse was found “not guilty” by a jury in the killing of two men who attacked him during a night of rioting and protests after the police shooting of Jacob Blake Jr., in August 2020. The *Militant* explained the importance of starting with the facts, which clearly showed Rittenhouse was defending himself and had not initiated any violent encounters.

The right to due process, to be innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, to a trial by a jury of your peers are rights the working class needs and they must be defended, Fruit said.

The young woman renewed and bought *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon.

During the course of the renewal drive, there are specials on eight books on Marxist politics along with 20% off on all other Pathfinder titles. (See ad on page 6.)

Special offer on new book

In addition, a new book coming off the presses next week will strengthen the drive. Subscribers can get *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity: The Long View of History* with articles by Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, George Novack, and Mary-Alice Waters for just \$5, less than half the cover price. The book is available in both English and Spanish. (See ad on this page.)

The book explains why the scientific foundation provided by Marxism is essential for understanding how human society was created through social labor, and why class-divided society, exploitation and the dictatorship of capital we live under today hasn’t always existed. Like slavery and serfdom before it, capitalist rule had a beginning and will have an end.

Expanding the long-term readership of the *Militant* will put the SWP in a good position to launch election campaigns for U.S. Senate, state governorships and other statewide and federal offices in coming weeks. Communist candidates and the *Militant* will be a pole of attraction for workers and others who want to stand up to the bosses’ exploitation and resist the impact of their



Militant/Sylvia Hansen  
Socialist Workers Party member Bill Arth, left, speaks to members of Teamsters Local 542 on strike at Republic Services in Chula Vista, California, Dec. 29. An essential part of the SWP drive to win longer-term *Militant* readers is campaigning in defense of fighting workers.

declining capitalist system on our lives. Many of those we meet are interested in discussing a working-class road forward and will want to consider joining the Socialist Workers Party.

*Militant* supporters are inviting readers to help get the paper and books into the hands of others, to attend Militant Labor Forums, and to join in bringing solidarity to picket lines of striking workers.

The renewal drive runs from Jan. 1 through Feb. 15. Renewals sold prior to the start of the drive count toward

the goals.  
In the course of getting back in touch with readers, we have learned some subscriptions have not been arriving. Subscribers who are not getting the paper should contact distributors nearest them, or the *Militant*, so we can ensure they get their paper.  
Want to help introduce friends, coworkers, neighbors and relatives to the *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party? See page 8 to contact the party branch nearest you, or contact the *Militant* at themilitant@mac.com.

'Militant' Renewal Drive January 1 - February 15		
Country	Quota	Sold
UNITED STATES		
Albany	16	2
Atlanta	16	1
Chicago	25	8
Cincinnati	10	1
Fort Worth	15	7
Lincoln	3	1
Los Angeles	17	3
Miami	7	1
Minneapolis	12	5
N. New Jersey	16	4
New York	25	5
Oakland	18	3
Philadelphia	10	4
Pittsburgh	12	2
Seattle	13	1
Washington	11	2
Total U.S.	226	50
Prisoners	10	8
UNITED KINGDOM		
London	8	4
Manchester	18	1
Total U.K.		5
Canada	30	3
New Zealand	5	1
Australia	10	1
Total	281	68
Int'l Goal	300	

New from Pathfinder:  
Labor, Nature, and the  
Evolution of Humanity  
The Long View of History  
By Frederick Engels, George Novack,  
Karl Marx, Mary-Alice Waters

Where did humanity come from? How did we arrive where we are today? Why is that even important?  
Because without understanding how human society, since our remotest ancestors, has been created through social labor, working people remain prisoners of the capitalist epoch in which we live.

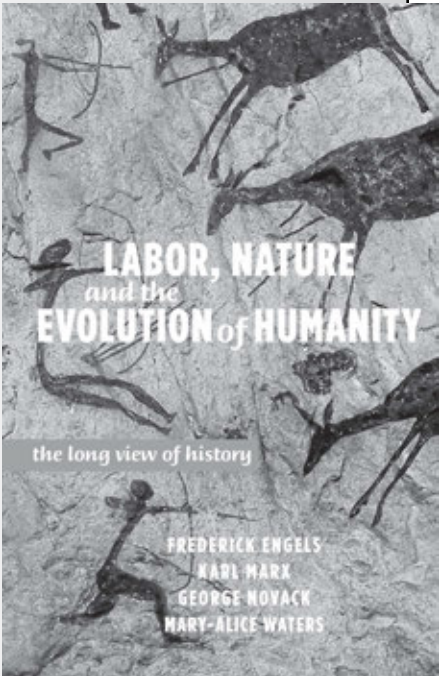
Without knowing how our labor transforms nature, how it’s the motor force along humanity’s ongoing road, we can’t see beyond the class exploitation that warps every aspect of our social relations, ideas, and values.

The dictatorship of capital hasn’t always existed. It’s a few hundred years old. Like slavery and serfdom before it, capitalist rule had a beginning. . . and will have an end.

Only the revolutionary conquest of state power by the working class, conscious of our class position and conditions of emancipation, can open the door to a future. One based not on dog-eat-dog capitalist exploitation, degradation of nature, subjugation of women, racism, and war.

A world built on human solidarity. A socialist world. That’s what a long view of history helps us understand.

Special offer through March 15 — \$7  
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# Moscow, Beijing, US frame opponents as ‘foreign agents’

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As they deepen their assaults on working people and political rights, the regimes in Moscow and Beijing are trying to silence political opponents by smearing them as “foreign agents.” Washington condemns these two rivals for repression, but has used the very same smears to target and frame up working-class organizations at home.

On Dec. 28, Russia’s Supreme Court ordered the closing of Memorial International, a long-standing rights organization that has chronicled decades of Stalinist political repression in the Soviet Union. Its archives hold tens of thousands of documents, books and artwork by prisoners spanning decades. The next day, a Moscow court issued a similar ruling against the allied Memorial Human Rights Center, which exposes the Vladimir Putin regime’s crackdown on political rights today. Both verdicts used the pretext that the organizations were “foreign agents” that had failed to properly register with the government as such.

The U.S. government issued a joint statement with the European Union and other allies Dec. 31, denouncing “Russian legislation on ‘foreign agents,’ which further silences independent voices.”

Putin has used the same slander before. His government declared a truck drivers’ union a “foreign agent” after it held a series of strikes to protest Moscow’s onerous anti-working-class tax laws in 2018.

Such smears are not new for Russia’s rulers. Vladimir Lenin and other leaders of the Bolshevik Party that led working people to overturn capitalist rule in 1917 were attacked by czarist officials, who claimed they were in the pay of Germany’s capitalist rulers. The slander failed to undercut growing support for the Bolsheviks during the struggle that brought workers and farmers to power, making the world’s first socialist revolution.

After Lenin’s death, Joseph Stalin headed a petty-bourgeois bureaucratic caste that reversed Lenin’s course. It carried through a counterrevolution that was consolidated with show trials of revolutionary leaders from 1936 to 1938, often by using frame-up accusations that these leaders of the 1917 revolution were now fascist “foreign agents.”

For the past 15 years, Memorial has commemorated the more than 750,000 executed victims of these purges. It also has honored those imprisoned in Stalin’s Gulag, a decadeslong system of forced labor camps across Siberia that incarcerated tens of millions of people.

Today Putin is moving to shut down opposition voices as he tries to advance the aims of Russia’s capitalist rulers in extending their grip over what they call the country’s “near abroad” — coun-

tries from the former Soviet Union. This included seizure of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine. In recent weeks, Moscow has deployed troops on Ukraine’s border, threatening the sovereignty of that country.

## Beijing clamps down in Hong Kong

Ever since the 2019 outpouring of millions in the streets of Hong Kong to fight for political rights, China’s rulers have claimed protesters there are “tools of foreign powers.” They imposed a national security law on the city last year to outlaw secession, subversion or collusion with foreign countries. It is the main instrument for Beijing’s drive to criminalize opponents and clamp down on political space needed by working people.

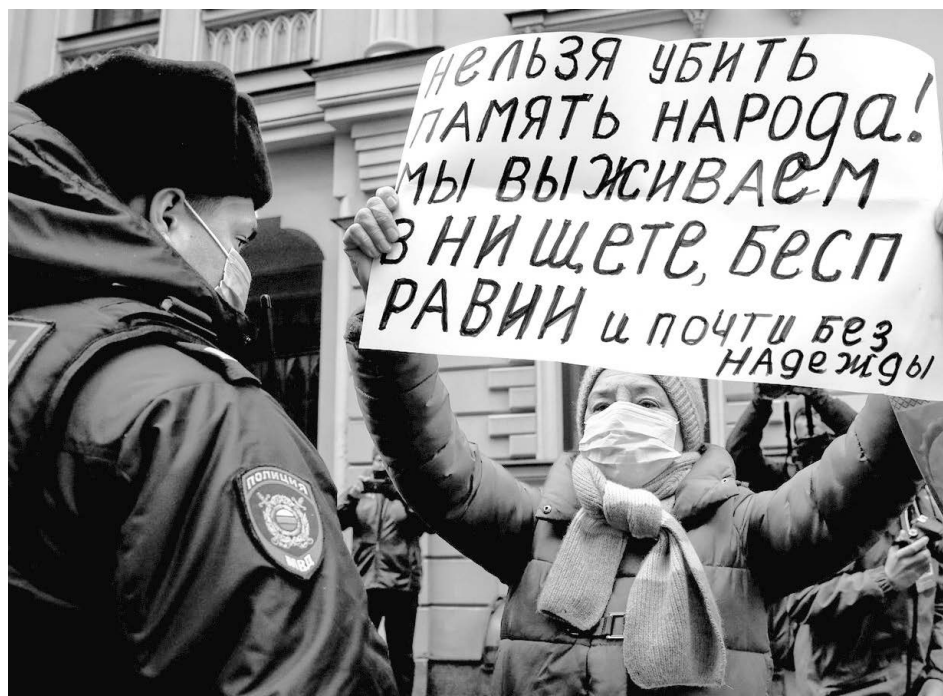
One by one, the central government has closed all media outlets not yet under its thumb. It staged an election in which only pro-Beijing “patriots” could run, resulting in a record-low voter turnout. And it has forced all civil rights groups and independent unions to disband.

A trial of 47 people in Hong Kong accused of a “vicious plot” to subvert the government has been put off until March. Mail with foreign correspondents has been used as grounds for denying most of them bail. The defendants’ “crime” was to contest now-postponed city elections against Beijing’s candidates.

## US gov’t uses ‘foreign agent’ slander

The criticism by Washington and its allied governments of these “foreign agent” charges is utter hypocrisy, given their long record using identical slanders at home. Alongside “national security” laws, claims of “foreign” interference have targeted Black rights fighters, union militants and other working-class fighters.

The U.S. rulers passed the Foreign



TASS/Artyom Geodakyan

Protest at Moscow closing of Memorial that chronicles Stalinist Gulag. Sign: “You can’t kill the memory of the people! We are surviving in poverty, lack of rights, and almost without hope.”

Agents Registration Act in 1938, and conducted a series of assaults on labor and anti-war organizations on the eve of the second imperialist world war. The law was put to immediate use. The FBI began an investigation of Socialist Workers Party members under this law, then charged them with “conspiracy to overthrow the government” under the thought-control Smith Act. The rulers used these “foreign agent” registration laws to go after the Communist Party and SWP in the 1950s.

In its historic and successful political and legal battle against the FBI and government spying and disruption in the 1970s and ’80s, the SWP fought to bar the government from using these laws against it.

In the 1941 Smith Act trial in Minneapolis, 18 cadres of the Teamsters union and the SWP were convicted and jailed for campaigning in opposition to Washington’s preparations to enter the second world slaughter. The SWP fights for the same communist program today.

Being an “unregistered foreign agent” was among the charges brought by the FBI in 1998 against five Cuban revolutionaries gathering information about

the violent assaults planned by rightist Cuban émigrés in the U.S. against Cuba’s people and government. After up to 16 years in U.S. prisons and an international campaign to win their release, they were freed in 2014.

The vilification of communists and working-class fighters as “foreign agents,” has been echoed in attacks made by one of the U.S. rulers’ two main parties against the other recently. For two years the liberal press, Democratic Party and middle-class left championed a fishing expedition by ex-FBI Director Robert Mueller into sham claims that former President Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign “colluded” with Moscow. Trump’s campaign manager, Paul Manafort, was indicted by Mueller and convicted under the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Like the rulers in Moscow and Beijing, the U.S. capitalist rulers fear the growing refusal of working people to bear the brunt of the gathering global crisis of capitalism and to begin organizing independently of them and their parties. They will continue to use the “foreign agents” and other witch hunt laws to try to break our struggles.

# California sanitation workers strike over safety, pay

## Continued from front page

he spent a lot of time discussing the union and the need for the workers to fight back, taking 15 or 20 minutes each day to talk to different co-workers, many of whom had never been in a union before. “Until now everybody was afraid,” he said. “Now we’re sticking up for ourselves.”

Republic Services is the second-largest waste collection company in the country, operating in 41 states with some 30,000 workers. The Teamsters union has been in negotiations with Republic over similar conditions facing workers in Orange County, California; Los Angeles; New Orleans; and Northern California.

Republic Services is holding out against demands by the San Diego workers to receive higher wages similar to those negotiated recently in Orange County, where the union won over \$2 an hour in the first year and a total of around \$6 over a six-year contract. Republic has only offered the San Diego workers \$1 the first year and 50 cents a year after that.

Pressure is mounting on the bosses as the garbage piles up. Residents are told they can take their own garbage to local dumps and the fees will be waived, but they are still paying for

garbage pickup. Many workers said they have received a lot of sympathy from the community.

“Gates rakes in the cash, we pick up the trash,” said Manny Puma, a relief driver who has 30 years’ experience in the industry and seven years with the company. He was referring to billionaire Bill Gates, one of Republic’s main shareholders. Puma said the company tries to justify a lower wage scale here by saying it’s a “border town” with Mexico, “but my gas costs the same as 90 miles up the road.”

Long hours are another important issue, along with demands from the bosses to work faster. “You’re pressured to pick up all the trash every day, but they write you up if you go over 12 hours,” Puma said. “If my truck has a problem, they say, ‘Well, we gotta get the garbage picked up.’ Safety is secondary to profits.”

For workers who live on the Mexican side of the border, the pandemic-motivated slowdown in processing people seeking to cross over has taken a big toll. Francisco J. Huerta, who has eight years with the company, is a U.S. citizen who lives in Tijuana. His wife tried in the past to get some permanent status in the U.S., but hasn’t succeeded. He wakes up at 12:30

a.m. to get in line in time to assure he won’t be late to his 6 a.m. shift. He often grabs some sleep in the parking lot at work, if he gets there with some time to spare.

“I used to cross in 20 minutes, now it’s two to three hours,” he said. “It is important to have the younger workers supporting us, the older workers were more unsure” about striking, he said. “But everybody got together.”

When I asked him if similar fights were happening in Mexico, he said it would be difficult to do this there now because of threats of violence and intimidation by the bosses, backed by the cops.

The bosses have been operating some trucks with what they call the “Blue Crew,” which strikers say is a special group Republic maintains specifically to scab on strikes around the country. They offer workers from nonunion plants extra pay and expenses to join the strikebreaking crew.

The strikers need solidarity! Join their picket lines at the company’s main Chula Vista yards. Get your union or co-workers to send messages of support and contributions, earmarked for the strike, to Teamsters Local 542, 4666 Mission Gorge Place, San Diego, CA 92120.

## — CALENDAR —

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

**Celebration of the Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.** Speakers and musical performances. Thurs., Jan. 20, 6 p.m. Lincoln United Methodist Church, 2242 S. Damen Ave., Tel.: (630) 915-0654. Masks and proof of vaccination required. Sponsored by Chicago Cuba Coalition, Southsiders for Peace, Socialist Workers Party, and Party for Socialism and Liberation.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## NY Teamsters strike at United Metro Energy enters ninth month

NEW YORK — Fourteen workers, members of Teamsters Local 553 in Brooklyn, have been on strike against United Metro Energy Corp. since last April.

They are fighting to win wages and conditions that match what workers at other fuel-terminal operators in the city are paid. Right now they receive only up to half the standard hourly wages. They are also fighting for better medical insurance and a night shift differential.

The strikers joined the union in February 2019, but owner John Catsimatidis, a billionaire and well-known city political figure, dragged out negotiations for more than two years.

“There was a negotiating session last week,” strike leader André Soleyn told the *Militant* when this correspondent joined the picket line Dec. 21. “But the company spent the entire session trying to keep as much as possible of the vacation pay we had earned before the strike. They never got to the bigger questions.”

Workers get vacation time on Jan. 1 each year based on the previous year’s work. Some workers are owed as much as four weeks. “We’re only allowed to use it during the warmer months, usually April through October. Since we went on strike in April, most of us still have it all,” he said. “They agreed to pay up to two weeks. Under the company’s ‘use it or lose it’ policy, the rest will disappear at the end of the year.”

Catsimatidis “considers himself a philanthropist,” Soleyn said. “He donates turkeys for the holiday and uniforms to school kids. But in the meantime he’s trying to squeeze every last penny from our families.”

Each Tuesday the strikers host an expanded picket line. On Dec. 14, they were joined by graduate students on strike at Columbia University who are members of the United Auto Workers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, and a former taxi driver who had been part of the hunger strike in the city demanding debt relief for medallion owners and others. The workers get strike pay that is supplemented by donations to a Go-

FundMe page, and contributions from other Teamsters locals.

“It’s hard to be out so long,” Soleyn said. “It affects our families. We want to work, but we need to be respected. We’re committed to continue until we have a contract we can accept.”

Solidarity and contributions are needed. Join the picket line! Send checks made out to Teamsters Local 553 (with Strike Fund on the memo line) to 265 W. 14th Street, Room 305, New York, NY 10011, or go to the strikers’ GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-striking-families>.

— Sara Lobman

## California hospital engineers end strike

OAKLAND, Calif. — After 90 days on the picket line, with Kaiser management still refusing to budge on its insulting concession demands, the 700 stationary engineers on strike at 24 Northern California hospitals ended their strike Dec. 18. Officials of the IUOE Stationary Engineers Local 39 told Kaiser the engineers would return to work unconditionally while negotiations continue.

“It’s bittersweet,” stationary engineer Richard Souza told *Militant* worker-correspondent Eric Simpson. “We didn’t win, but we stayed together and kept the union to fight another day. Even if you are close to retiring, you have to fight for the next generation.”

When Simpson joined pickets barbecuing outside Kaiser’s corporate headquarters on the last day of the strike, the bond forged among strikers on the picket line was evident. “No one crossed the picket line,” striker David Goldsberry said. “That’s a win for the union.”

There was no vote by the membership on the decision to return to work. At the Oakland Kaiser hospital picket tent, the reaction was mixed, with many expressing relief that the strike was over. While negotiations continue, engineers receive the same pay as under the old contract.

“At first I thought maybe we’d be out a week,” engineer Mohammad Yousafzai told the *Militant*. “Now I realize Kaiser doesn’t care about us or the patients.”

When the strikers returned to work they received a warm welcome from



Militant/Sara Lobman

**Teamsters Local 553 members and supporters picket United Metro Energy in Brooklyn, New York, Dec. 14. Workers are demanding pay equal to other area fuel-terminal operators.**

their fellow hospital workers, along with a huge backlog of broken equipment.

The strikers faced an almost total news blackout by the bosses’ press. “Working-class media, that’s what we need,” San Leandro striker Nelson Ocampo told members of the Socialist Workers Party when they brought copies of the *Militant* to the pickets.

In November, thousands of nurses and other hospital employees took part in sympathy strikes in support of Local 39. “It’s not about one group or union but the entire workforce being together,” said Mark Sutherland, a stalwart on the picket line in Oakland.

— Betsey Stone and Eric Simpson

## Ironworkers end strike at Erie Strayer, win dental plan

PITTSBURGH — After 75 days on strike, the 40 members of Ironworkers Regional Shop Local 851 at Erie Strayer Company approved a new contract Dec. 19. It includes a dental plan for the first time and higher wage raises than the company initially offered. The Erie plant produces concrete-making machinery used on large construction sites.

The contract includes wage increases of 56 cents per hour for the first year and 40 cents for each of the following four years. The unionists had rejected the company’s initial five-year contract offer of 5 cents to 15 cents an hour. Other

issues were left unresolved, including a requirement that workers call in every day for any absence and bereavement.

Key to the victory was the continual mobilization of the membership and solidarity from other unions and the community. Ironworkers Amalgamated Local 841 Vice President Tracy Cutright told the *Militant* in a phone interview. United Electrical union members from Wabtec, who fought their own strike battle in 2019, organized a rally in support and their members were a regular presence on the picket line. Other unions in the area from roofers to Teamsters brought donations of food and drink. Seven unions joined a Nov. 18 solidarity march.

Cutright reported that with union members back on the job, the bosses are trying to enforce rules that they never enforced before and inventing new ones. “We’re fighting all of it,” he said.

— Candace Wagner

## Pallet distribution workers in Manchester strike for 5% pay rise

MANCHESTER, England — “Our claim is for a 5% rise in our wages, the company is offering 2%,” Malcolm Bostock, a Unite union representative, told the *Militant* on the picket line at the CHEP U.K. plant in Trafford Park. CHEP is owned by Australian company Brambles, one of the major distributors of pallets worldwide.

Bostock and some five dozen of his co-workers have been on strike since Dec. 17, after four one-day strikes. “We’ve worked all the way through the COVID pandemic, we’ll keep going until we get what we deserve,” he said.

Strikers maintain a 24-hour picket line from Monday to Friday. “People support us everywhere now, we are turning wagons away, 70% are driving off,” Bostock said in a video posted online. Those visiting the strikers have turned up with food, drink and wood to keep the much-needed fire on their picket line going. A delegation from the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union based at Piccadilly train station visited the pickets.

“There’s no production going on in there,” said striker John Reid. “They thought they could just carry on, that not enough would join in the strike, but we’ve shown them.”

Spirit on the picket line is high. “In the lead-up to the strike several more workers have joined the union,” said Mark Allan, a former coal miner, who has worked at CHEP for 25 years. “We’ve got unity. They never thought we would be so strong.”

— Hugo Wils

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



**January 20, 1997**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Fifty Black farmers and supporters from the National Black Farmers Association — coming from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas — demonstrated in front of the White House December 12 to protest racist discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Daniel Glickman met with the farmers and announced December 18 a temporary halt to foreclosure sales on delinquent loans.

National Black Farmers Association president John Boyd said that the halt doesn’t go far enough. “We want to go back to 1968. Everyone with complaints filed with the USDA since then should be compensated, not just those facing foreclosure right now. This moratorium is temporary and leaves out most farmers. If these cases are not settled in 90 days we’ll be back to protest.”



**January 21, 1972**

The revolutionary offensive on major fronts throughout Indochina once again testifies to the strength of the liberation struggle in Southeast Asia despite eight years of Washington’s murderous counterrevolutionary warfare. There is no piece of land on the war-ravaged subcontinent that the imperialist-backed forces hold with certainty.

On Jan. 11, the Saigon regime reported the withdrawal of more than 10,000 troops from eastern Cambodia in order to bolster the defenses of Saigon. A dispatch to the *New York Times* from Saigon stated: “It is widely believed that the redeployment of South Vietnamese forces is a sign of fears the Saigon government has often expressed that the Communists may try to launch a major offensive next month before President Nixon visits Peking, to embarrass him there and in the United States in an election year.”



**January 18, 1947**

Jan. 14 — The British government’s use of troops yesterday to break the week-old strike of London truck drivers was condemned by workers throughout England. The first protest took the form of an immediate walkout by several thousand porters and food handlers employed in London’s major food markets. Sympathy strikes were later reported in Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Ipswich and Southampton.

The strike had begun a week ago with a few hundred drivers. By yesterday it had spread to 21,000 drivers and helpers handling meat and other foodstuffs in London. Among their demands were reduction of the work week from 48 to 44 hours, and overtime pay after eight hours.

The last time the Labor Party government used the armed forces against strikers was during the dock-workers’ struggle in the autumn of 1945.



# Castro: Marxist leadership

**Continued from front page**  
the military-police tyranny assassinated 56 captured revolutionaries and put Castro on trial. Castro's speech at the trial was smuggled out of prison and distributed by fellow revolutionaries as "History Will Absolve Me" in tens of thousands of copies.

In the face of a growing popular movement demanding amnesty, the dictatorship released Castro and other combatants in 1955. Castro went to Mexico, assembling and training combatants, returning to Cuba with 82 revolutionary fighters on the Granma in 1956. He was the central leader of a handful of revolutionary fighters that made it to the Sierra Maestra mountains, where they initiated the guerrilla struggle against the dictatorship.

By Jan. 1, 1959, the Rebel Army had decisively defeated the regime's army and Batista fled. Workers across the island massively embraced Castro's call for a general strike. The army and police were dismantled and replaced by revolutionary combatants.

The new government was at first made up primarily of anti-Batista bourgeois politicians, who tried to block the advancing revolution. But the revolutionary upsurge rapidly pushed them aside. By February 1959, Castro had been appointed prime minister, and rebel forces consolidated a workers and farmers government, which organized peasants to implement a deep land reform and workers fought to impose workers control over the big capitalist companies.

❖  
**FIDEL CASTRO**  
You cannot make a revolution, and above all, you cannot carry a revolution forward without a strong and disciplined organization.

In the common goal that united all revolutionary and non-revolutionary organizations — because there were forces against Batista's tyranny, which you could not call revolutionary — there were politicians who were simply against Batista because he had kept them out of his government.

Those people in power would have maintained a professional army, instruments of repression; they would have maintained all the organs of persecution; they would have maintained the existing social system. In other words, there was a group representing the dominant economic interests and imperialists which was against Batista simply because they wanted to be the ones in the government; they did not at all like having Batista and Batista's clique instead of them doing the robbing.

What we always had in mind was to attempt an uprising in one region and try to keep it going and, if that failed, then to go into the mountains with all those weapons and begin a struggle in the mountains.

Can anyone imagine that you can win revolutionary power with a handful of men? We never imagined such a thing. We knew that you can win power only with the support of the people, by mobilizing the masses.

Everyone in our country was aware of conditions in the rural areas. Peasants who were not squatters were tenants. Squatters on public

lands were the victims of constant evictions and abuse. Cane workers toiled three of four months during the harvest, and two or three months during "the dead season."

Unemployment in the countryside was high. The rural population had migrated to the city where in turn there was already much unemployment. A tenant on the coffee plantation had to pay one-third or one-quarter of his crops. The tobacco tenant farmer or sharecropper also had to pay 25% or 30% of his crop. The cane planter had to pay a lower percentage, but still it was high.

Commodities were very dear; the peasants had to sell their produce cheap. Tens of thousands of men and women from the cane fields, from the sugar plantations, who had no work during "the dead season" went into the mountains to pick coffee.

When we reached the Sierra Maestra, however, it was evident that we had not organized certain aspects of the struggle we were undertaking. For example, we hadn't even made a geographical survey of the Sierra Maestra. We hadn't even set up a preliminary organization there. It may be good to point up these things so that they can serve as examples to other exploited peoples. We did not know a single peasant in the Sierra Maestra.

In other words, conditions were very difficult, but it's true that where the objective conditions are favorable, the revolution can develop. This teaches the first lesson: that there can be no revolution in the first place, unless there are objective circumstances at a given historical moment to facilitate and make the revolution. In other words, a revolution cannot be created out of the minds of men.

**Political work among peasants**  
We began to do some political work among the peasants, explaining to them the aims of the revolution. It is beyond question that in the valley [the cities], many young people struggled, made sacrifices, staked their lives and fought heroically.

[But] the arena of the struggle was the mountains. It was perfectly logical that in those objective conditions existing in the Sierra Maestra, the revolutionary work should develop until it could count on practically unanimous support of the peasants — as it eventually did.

We were already counting on that social force although we had few weapons and a great many difficulties. Guerrilla fighting became nationwide: first, in the Second Front of Las Villas; then, in the Second Front of Oriente. We began to give up the putschist type of tactics. The tactics we favored were wearing down the forces of the tyranny.

What was it that made the maneuvers of the American embassy and of reaction disappear like candy in a school yard? Simply the general strike. It was not necessary to fire one more shot.

What do reaction and imperialism try to do? The history of Latin America is full of examples. What they try to preserve at all costs is the military apparatus, the military machine of the system. In the final analysis, neither

## 'End Washington's economic embargo of Cuba!'



Militant/Rachele Fruit

A vigil at Miami International Airport, Dec. 23, above, protests the U.S. rulers' six-decade-long embargo against Cuba. Similar actions were held the same day in Albany and New York, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Seattle.

Actions were also held in Havana and Holguín in Cuba, and in cities around the world, including Mexico City; Panama City; Rome; Barcelona, Spain; and Vancouver, British Columbia, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, in Canada.

Washington's embargo is aimed at toppling the Cuban government and crushing the socialist revolution made by workers and farmers in 1959. President Joseph Biden has kept in place the growing sanctions imposed by previous administrations, Democratic and Republican alike. The tightening embargo has worsened the hardships facing people on the island, but failed to undercut their determination to defend their revolution.

— TERRY EVANS

imperialism nor the ruling classes give a hoot who the president is, who is a representative, who is a senator.

When a crisis of this kind arises in any country, the prime objective of the people's movement is to destroy the military machine and seize its arms. This is an indispensable condition; without it, the revolution can be checked, can be betrayed, and can be crushed.

We do not invent this; it is all very clearly stated in a book by Lenin — I imagine that all of you or most of you are familiar with it — called *State and Revolution*.

Of course, that is not the only condition for a revolution; but it is an indispensable condition.

### The force Lenin spoke about

How different are the power, security and confidence, the force of the revolution of today from those early days when the revolution had to face the most trying moments; when it had to face the responsibilities of power, to launch a revolutionary program, and when a large part of the government, all of the press, all of the mass media and, above all, a force — a force that I believe was the greatest — the force Lenin had spoken about, that is, the force of custom.

That is, force of habit, a series of prejudices, instilled, sustained, and spread by the ruling economic classes, by imperialism and by capitalism in our country, constituted, beyond any doubt whatever, one of the most powerful forces that faced the revolution.

All the forces, which were previously divided among these separate organizations, [July 26 Movement and Rebel Army, the Popular Socialist Party, and the Revolutionary Directorate] are now fused in a single organization, under a single revolutionary leadership. It means simply a tremendous strengthening of the revolution.

What is the most revolutionary class? The working class, beyond a

shadow of a doubt. Why? Because its social position makes it revolutionary.

I began to see contradictions and began to have a few revolutionary ideas while taking a course on bourgeois political economy at the university.

Later on, naturally, at the university, we began making our first contacts with the Communist Manifesto, with the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and all that. This marked (the beginning of) a process. I can certainly say, admitting it honestly, many of the things which we have done in the revolution are not things we invented — far from it.

When we left the university, especially in my own particular case, I had

# Pharma bosses, US gov't fight over patents, millions lack vaccines

**BY TERRY EVANS**

"All working people should get vaccinated, including getting booster shots. This is in the interests of strengthening the unity and fighting capacity of the working class," said John Studer, Socialist Workers Party national campaign director, Jan. 5. "Our unions must lead this fight. This will advance our struggles against boss attacks on our wages and working conditions, and for building solidarity with all those struggling against the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist rulers."

"U.S. Companies Are Thriving," boasted a Jan. 1 *Wall Street Journal* headline. Big capital borrowed big sums in 2020 and are now reporting some of their best ever financial results, with fewer bankruptcies among large capitalist ventures and the stock markets at near-record high levels. Especially profitable are vaccine monopolies Moderna and Pfizer, which anticipate combined sales of more than \$52 billion in 2022.

The bosses are demanding more, targeting their workers to boost profits, which has led to a growing number of lockouts and strike battles. And sharp price hikes — especially for food, housing, gas and other essentials — are driving our real wages further down. On top of this, workers bear the brunt of the "you're-on-your-own" response of bosses and their governments to the latest rise in COVID-19 infections.

With some 62% of the U.S. population vaccinated, the less virulent, fast-



Militant/Sylvia Hansen

Striking sanitation workers picket Republic Services in Chula Vista, California, Dec. 29. Union fight to get workers vaccinated would strengthen labor and struggles against bosses' attacks.

spreading Omicron mutation is proving less fatal than past strains. But rising infection rates and government-imposed mandates have exposed once again the incapacity of the capitalist rulers to provide the health care workers need. Home test kits disappeared from store shelves, and government promises to mail them to people's homes is nowhere in place. Testing centers are overwhelmed with huge lines and long waits to get results, even though many bosses demand workers produce negative results.

New York City authorities ordered ambulance crews to stop taking people

with "influenza-like illnesses" to hospitals, but to simply leave them at home.

Liberal commentators and politicians blame our problems on "the pandemic," covering up for the inability of the for-profit capitalist system to provide for human needs worldwide. The rapid discovery of effective vaccines — a conquest for humanity — was never intended by the bosses and their government to ensure vaccination of the world's population as swiftly as possible. This is the only way to minimize deaths from mutating strains of the virus. Instead, control over the vaccines was used to boost profits of the top-dog pharmaceutical bosses and tighten their grip on markets at the expense of their rivals.

The major capitalist powers — especially the U.S. imperialist rulers — cornered the world market, leaving billions of toilers in the semicolonial world in the lurch.

### Health care is a working-class battle

Moderna bosses are waging a fight to prevent three scientists from the government's National Institutes of Health from being named as co-inventors of its highly-profitable mRNA vaccine — the company's only product on the market. The government uses the dispute to blame the company for holding up needed licensing of the shot worldwide and getting it to many other countries where vaccines are scarce. But hoarding by the U.S. government has fueled the shortages.

Over a year after immunization programs were first rolled out, only about 51% of the world's population is fully vaccinated. These are largely in the advanced capitalist countries, as well as in China and Russia, which use their own shots, with results that have been less effective. That means close to 4 billion people are not protected.

The owners of Moderna, Pfizer and other vaccine manufacturers have refused to waive patents and take steps to share their formulas so vaccine production can be ramped up around the world.

This is the opposite course to that taken by Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin, who discovered the two vaccines used to effectively end polio in the 1950s. They both refused to seek patents that would have put barriers in front of their use worldwide.

The United Nations World Health Organization promised to deliver 2 billion

doses throughout the world by the end of 2021. But hampered by capitalist hoarders, like Washington, it made good on less than half of that, shipping out only 907 million doses by Dec. 30.

Decades of plunder by imperialist powers, alongside exploitation and corruption by local capitalist rulers, has resulted in minimal or no health infrastructure in countries across Africa. Half the countries on the continent have administered less than 50% of the doses they have received. In Nigeria, where only 2.1% of the population are fully vaccinated, the government had to destroy 1 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine Dec. 22, after they expired.

WHO now predicts it will take at least until August 2024 to vaccinate 70% of people in Africa.

### Cuba's socialist revolution

One government in the world has an opposite approach. As a result of workers and farmers making and defending their socialist revolution, the government in Cuba acts on what working people need.

Despite an unrelenting U.S. embargo aimed at blocking all sources of revenue to the island, the government there developed three effective vaccines and ensured they were distributed. By Dec. 31, 86.5% of the country was fully vaccinated, with many more having begun the series of three shots. Daily death rates have plunged.

The program is not enforced with mandates, as in the U.S. It is delivered freely all across the island and given voluntarily by the country's national health system, backed by thousands of volunteers. This is a powerful example of what is possible when working people see the government as their own.

Cuba has more doctors per population than any country in the world, and has sent 2,000 medical volunteers abroad to countries hardest hit by the pandemic. On Dec. 29 the Mexican government authorized the use of Cuba's Abdala COVID vaccine, which is already exported to Vietnam and Venezuela.

The Iranian government is mass producing Cuba's Soberana vaccine. But before WHO will approve these vaccines, they insist the Cuban government must further document proof of their effectiveness — despite their well-known successful use in Cuba and growing use elsewhere. Cuban officials say they will submit the paperwork WHO requires.

Since the earliest days of the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in the 1950s, the Marxist leadership of the revolutionary movement in Cuba has treated health care as a human right. After the conquest of power in 1959 medical treatment ceased being a commodity to be sold at a profit and was made available to all.

Cuba's vaccination program is a source of immense pride to the Cuban people and a powerful example to workers and farmers worldwide of what we can accomplish when we take political power into our own hands.

"As we fight against the attacks of the bosses and their government in the U.S.," the SWP's Studer said, "workers and farmers here will increasingly look to the revolutionary example of Cuba for a road forward here."

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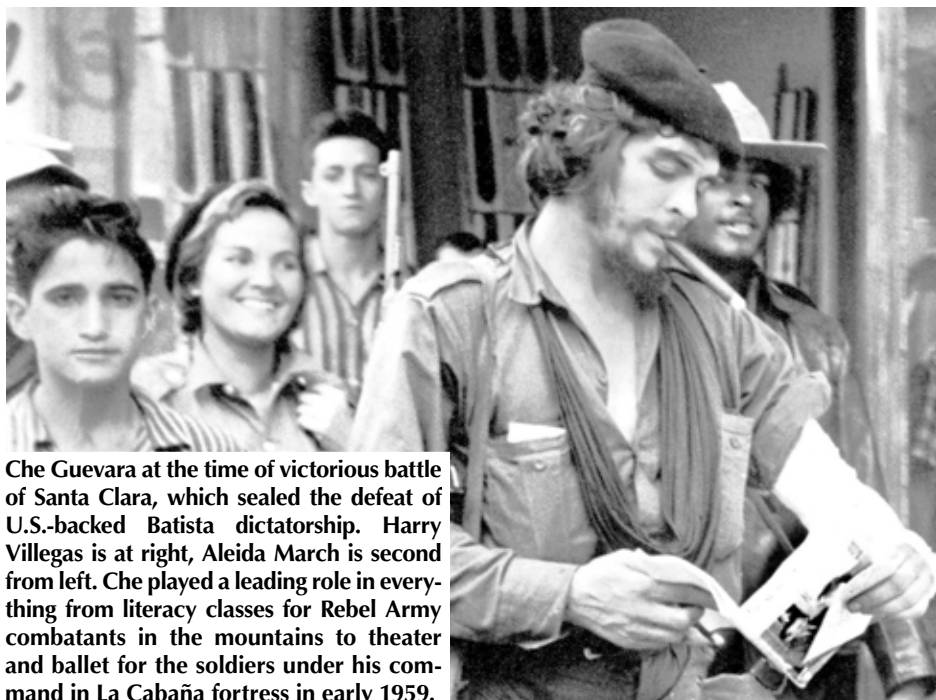
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# ‘Culture enables man to be more complete, revolutionary’

Making History: Interviews With Four Generals of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces by José Ramón Fernández, Enrique Carreras, Harry Villegas, and Néstor López Cuba is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for January. The excerpt below is from an interview by Mary-Alice Waters, the book’s editor, with Villegas, “We Are a Political Army Fully Aware of What We Are Defending.” From 1957 Villegas served under the command of Ernesto Che Guevara in the Rebel Army during the Cuban revolutionary war led by Fidel Castro. Villegas later earned his nom de guerre, Pombo, while serving with Che in Cuba’s internationalist campaigns in the Congo and Bolivia. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Che Guevara at the time of victorious battle of Santa Clara, which sealed the defeat of U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. Harry Villegas is at right, Aleida March is second from left. Che played a leading role in everything from literacy classes for Rebel Army combatants in the mountains to theater and ballet for the soldiers under his command in La Cabaña fortress in early 1959.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

MARY-ALICE WATERS: I’d like to go back to the early days of the revolution and your experiences as a young soldier under Che’s command at La Cabaña. There is a very specific thing related to culture and education, to the social aims of the Rebel Army, that we’d like to ask you about.

One of the recent “biographies” of Che quotes from some dispatches sent by U.S. embassy personnel to Wash-

ington during the first months of 1959. The communiqués express concern over what was happening in the garrison at La Cabaña. Che, they reported, was doing something with very disturbing implications. He was organizing a department of culture within the Rebel Army and teaching soldiers to read! The Department of Culture was also doing things like organizing concerts, poetry readings, and ballet performances right there in La Cabaña, not for the officers but for all the soldiers. The dispatch said this was very worrisome, because it showed Che’s communist tendencies.

I think this captures something very important, on both sides. The U.S. government had good reason to be afraid, of course. When education and the cultural conquests of all previous civilization become the property of the working class, when working people take this as their right, their prerogative, the rulers should tremble. A new ruling class is in the process of asserting itself. The incident also captures the importance that not only Che but the entire leadership of the Rebel Army gave to education, to broadening the cultural horizons of working people. It captures the class character . . .

HARRY VILLEGAS: . . . of the revolution.

WATERS: Yes, and the aspirations of working people to transform themselves, to educate themselves, to be the bearers of culture into the future that they alone can build.

VILLEGAS: Che felt that the task of

creating and developing the Rebel Army’s Department of Instruction and Culture at the time was not only to encourage the creation of cultural works. Che was the first one to start a campaign for literacy. Because there is no culture without literacy.

The Rebel Army was an army of people with humble origins. If you read the book *Secretos de generales*, you’ll see that almost all the generals interviewed come from families of workers or peasants. That was the composition of the Rebel Army. That’s why the first thing we did was set up schools to eradicate illiteracy. The Department of Instruction was created, and everyone who couldn’t read and write was enrolled in these schools. Che looked for teachers and the work began.

As part of all this, a movement was created to bring cultural works to those who had never seen them before, to the members of the Rebel Army. We had a large theater in La Cabaña, a huge theater that could hold the entire garrison. Plays were put on there, ballet performances, and other cultural presentations. Movies were brought in, and other compañeros would join us for discussion after a movie was shown. The purpose of all this was to raise the cultural level of the army, which at that time was very low. Almost all of us were peasants.

I think the North Americans must have been worried, thinking that culture for workers and peasants was a sign of communism. But our purpose

was to create a movement that later grew very powerful in the army, with the aim of becoming participants in culture, making it our own. So a group of amateurs developed, which put on plays, performed songs, held festivals. All these things were promoted as part of the process of creating a higher cultural level.

We are still fighting for this today. In the armed forces we’re still fighting for soldiers not to become isolated. Because the life of a military man ends up isolating him from cultural events unless that is consciously combated. For example, I can tell you that one of the hardest things we face in the army is to get soldiers into the habit of going to museums from time to time. You’ve got to take people there. Soldiers don’t spontaneously go to museums very often. The soldier has very little free time, and when he does he looks for other forms of entertainment. We’re fighting hard for this, to get people used to going to museums, to have culture become ingrained in the military environment, to maintain a cultural level, to get people to like cultural events, to like poetry, to like theater. But also for them to be able to know when the poetry is not good, to be able to appreciate the quality of cultural works.

Che was a man with a very high cultural level. He was not just someone with a broad political knowledge. He also had broad cultural knowledge. He liked poetry, the theater, all these things, and he tried to get all of us to take part in it.

Today the entire population has a different cultural level. The Special Period, of course, has meant fewer performances being opened, but now we’re beginning to see a resurgence. We have real theater, like the Escambray Theater Company, which brings plays directly to the countryside, and it’s met a tremendous response.

There’s an element of truth in what the North Americans were saying about this. Nobody writes or produces a play for the sole purpose of educating people about theater. In other countries, people usually do it for money. But in the case of the revolution, it wasn’t for economic reasons. The important thing was getting the message across. Culture enables man to be fuller, more complete, more human, and therefore more revolutionary.

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# Fight for workers control of production!

“This is all about control for them, control over union rights,” locked-out oil refinery worker Darrell Kyle told the *Militant*, referring to ExxonMobil bosses’ assault on the United Steelworkers union in Beaumont, Texas.

Like other workers walking picket lines, Steelworkers there refuse to buckle to the bosses’ drive to gut safety. Workers are fighting to ensure every crew at the refinery has at least one experienced member to lead in bringing down and starting up production units. The bosses responded with a drive to break the union.

Striking sanitation workers in the San Diego area are demanding safer trucks and working conditions as well as higher pay. The Teamsters’ fight there, like the union struggle at ExxonMobil, needs solidarity and support from fellow workers and our unions.

Under capitalism, bosses organize production to maximize profits, tossing aside any concern about workers’ limbs and lives, endangering people living nearby and contaminating the skies, soil and seas with no regard for their preservation and use by future generations. For them, workers injured or killed can be replaced, but lost income is the ultimate disaster.

To meet this challenge, workers are turning to each other and using union power. The just-concluded strike by nurses at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts, is an example. They struck for months to limit the number of patients each nurse is responsible for looking after so they could provide needed care for each one. They set an important example.

Capitalist government regulations do nothing to stop the bosses’ drive against safety. When Colorado officials allowed the JBS slaughterhouse in Greeley to reopen after a wave of COVID infections in 2020,

they said work stations should be six feet apart. But last summer bosses cut that back to two feet, to speed up production and defend their profits.

*All* work can be performed safely! No worker has to die on the job! But this is only possible if workers fight to take greater and greater control of production out of the bosses’ hands. The unions need to take control over line speed and all aspects of conditions on the job, with the power to shut the plant down. We need to gain control over what is made as well as how, to ensure not only that what is produced is safe, but that it meets the social needs of working people.

Taking and exercising control of production advances workers’ confidence in our own capacities and worth. We can see more clearly that our class can and must take over the management of the entire economy. To do so, we need to take state power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families and establish our own government, a workers and farmers government. We need our own political party, a labor party, to break from the bosses’ twin Democratic and Republican parties and mobilize millions in action.

Along the way, workers and our unions can join with consumer groups and force open the bosses’ books, expose their trade secrets and end the criminal use of patents by owners of pharmaceutical companies that prevent countries around the world from acquiring life-saving vaccines. By taking control of production workers can harness scientific advances and use the full potential of nature and our labor to make food, shelter and many other essentials available to all.

Workers and farmers in Cuba show that with communist leadership it is possible for our class to chart a course to end capitalist exploitation and oppression once and for all.

## Colorado fire disaster is result of capitalist greed

**Continued from front page**

out. He fled, trying to find a safe place to ride things out, but instead watched flames engulf building after building, home after home. “It was like a bombed-out war zone,” Crawford said. “The sun was obscured by the smoke. The smell. It was surreal.”

The misery facing working people was exacerbated when the fire was followed by 10 inches of snow and single-digit freezing temperatures.

Thousands whose homes weren’t leveled were left without heat and power, and faced bursting water pipes. Some 170 people sought warmth and a bed in a hastily opened shelter and many more were housed by family, friends and volunteers.

While the cause of the fire is still under investigation, politicians and the media are already looking for a scapegoat, talking up a report of a shed fire in the housing complex of a group called The Twelve Tribes, a Christian religious sect. Their aim is to shift blame to a small group as opposed to the dog-eat-dog capitalist system that makes housing a question of profits not people’s needs.

There was no government plan for such a disaster. All people in the area got was an order to evacuate, with no place to go. Roadways became clogged, endangering ever more in traffic jams in small neighborhoods. You and your family were left on your own to find a way out and find shelter and food.

Some working people came forward to try and fill in the vacuum. Stacy Howard, a school teacher, offered a room in her home over Facebook, saying her family was fine, but her “community was broken.”

Many people came out to try to help fight fires and save homes, with little success.

Examples of working-class solidarity shone through. When the fire was over, post office workers and letter carriers from surrounding areas volunteered to come in and set up ways for people to get letters, mail-order prescriptions and late Christmas presents. They cleaned up the Louisville Post Office Sunday, Jan. 2, and built a series of 15 cardboard holding cases, each with 70 numbered slots for those whose houses no longer existed. Others got in trucks and drove out to deliver the mail to homes still standing.

“The least I can do is making sure that getting their

mail — and especially the important things that come — is organized and is not an additional burden,” letter carrier Wes Maynard told the *Colorado Sun*.

### Housing for profits, not people

Housing, especially for workers, is in short supply in this growing area northwest of Denver. Over the last decade Louisville’s population grew by 15.5%. Builders and landlords see profits to be made, and aim to cash in. Colorado faces severe droughts. Rivers throughout the state are at historic lows, leading to government cuts in access to water rights in the area, with many farmers and ranchers facing catastrophic consequences.

These dry conditions, combined with a hurricane-force windstorm, fueled the fire. But the devastating impact was avoidable. Liberal pundits and politicians say the culprit is “climate change,” but this isn’t why so many thousands are now faced without a place to live.

That is due to the workings of capitalism.

The Marshall Fire may have spread because of the extreme dry conditions, but the devastation was caused by a system that doesn’t prioritize building housing with fire-resistant materials and enough space between units to mitigate the dangers of living in fire-prone areas. Housing is just a commodity on the capitalist stock exchanges and built to maximize profits.

Downtown Denver was burned to the ground in the Great Fire of 1863. Fueled by strong winds and an abundance of wood buildings, a small fire turned into a huge conflagration. Within three hours, almost every downtown building was leveled.

But building housing that can meet the intense fire risks of living in the high plains desert can be done. Immediately following the Great Fire, Denver began to rebuild, but this time nearly every building in the city was built with brick, not wood.

As I watched and waited for evacuation orders in my town, I knew what was happening around me could have been avoided. Today there exist stronger and much more effective fire-retardant construction materials. But to use them would cut into profits.

This was all the more evident the day after the fire when you looked around and the only thing left standing were stone fireplace chimneys.

## ‘Felony murder’ laws

**Continued from front page**

execution of Nathaniel Woods. Woods was executed March 5, 2020, in Alabama for the killing of three Birmingham police officers. But he didn’t kill anyone. He was unarmed when cops were gunned down as they went into a house with a warrant to arrest Woods, an African American, on a misdemeanor.

This case exposes the gruesome workings of the capitalist “justice” system, and of the spurious charges of “capital” or “felony murder,” and is the subject of a new documentary by the *New York Times*, “To Live and Die in Alabama.”

“Nathaniel Woods is 100% innocent,” death-row inmate Kerry Spencer wrote in a letter in support of Woods. “I know this to be a fact because I’m the man that shot and killed all three of the officers.”

Alabama is one of 26 states where an accomplice can be sentenced to death. Prosecutors didn’t have to prove Woods killed anyone to get him convicted for capital murder. Instead, they claimed he “lured” cops to their deaths. Eleven of the 1,458 executions in the U.S. between 1985 and 2018 involved cases in which the defendant neither arranged nor committed murder, according to the Death Penalty Information Center

In addition, Alabama is the only state that does not require jury unanimity in recommending executions. In Woods’ case, the jury voted 10 to 2 for putting him to death. Only two of the dozen jurors hearing the case in the Black-majority city of Birmingham were African American. Both voted against.

### Woods flees as cops are killed

The cops were killed on June 17, 2004, at a one-story apartment in the Ensley neighborhood of the city that Spencer and Woods used for a drug-dealing operation. At 10:30 a.m., two cops, Carlos Owen and Harley Chisholm, arrived at the apartment to check on stolen cars, they said. Woods and Spencer engaged in a heated argument with them.

The cops left and ran Woods’ name through their database, discovering he was charged with a misdemeanor four months earlier in a domestic dispute.

Four cops then pulled up by the apartment. Owen went to the back insisting that there was a warrant for Woods’ arrest and he must come outside. Woods refused. The cops rushed into the apartment. Spencer opened fire, killing Owen, Chisholm and Charles Bennett. Woods escaped and was sitting on a porch across from the apartment as the shootings took place. “I was so shocked,” Woods later told the police. “And I was hollering, telling him to stop, stop, stop.”

Spencer was tried first. He testified he shot in self-defense when cops pulled guns on him and the shooting was not planned, as prosecutors alleged. The jurors recommended Spencer get life without parole but the judge overruled them and sentenced him to death.

A month later, in October 2005, Woods stood trial on capital murder charges. Marquita McClure, Woods’ girlfriend, had told detectives he and Spencer talked about killing cops before the shooting. But later she told a pretrial hearing she “made that up.” During an appeal of the conviction, Woods’ attorney said cops had threatened to charge McClure with parole violations if she didn’t testify against him.

For the next 15 years Woods was incarcerated on death row. During that time he wrote poetry and converted to Islam. About a month before his scheduled execution a fight demanding clemency was organized by Lauren Faraino, a corporate lawyer, and her mother, Elaena Starr, whose husband is the son of football Hall of Fame quarterback Bart Starr. Others demanded a halt to the execution, including Martin Luther King III, Kim Kardashian and rapper T.I.

About 22 minutes before the scheduled execution, Justice Clarence Thomas of the U.S. Supreme Court granted a temporary stay, good for six hours until the death warrant expired. Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey then rejected the appeal for clemency. A few minutes later the Supreme Court lifted the stay. With poisonous chemicals administered through his veins, Woods was declared dead at 9:01 p.m. He was 43.

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